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PRIDE'S NEW POWERHOUSE

Miss Trans Michigan Baddie
Brooks dominates Pride stage

DEI TURMOIL ON CAMPUS

Michigan colleges split
over Trump crackdown

FLEEING FOR SAFETY

One trans person's story
on relocating to Michigan

Bold Voice, Bigger Stage

Jeremy Moss, Michigan's first openly gay Senator,
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By Sarah Bricker Hunt

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5 **Queer** Things You Can Do Right Now-ish

BY KELLI DUNHAM

Who are we kidding? The days of packing Pride into four tiny weeks is vanishing faster than corduroy in climate change. That's all to say our mid-May calendar is bulging bigger than a baby queer who used their winter socks to fill out their 501s. Whether you're laughing at trans comedy with a ghostly twist, Going Girl with Mimi Gonzalez and 5,000 of Mimi's closest friends, or simply giving your neighborhood some queer zine love, here are just a few ways you can soak in all that delicious Michigan queer joy.



Go Girl! Saugatuck. Photo: gogirlsaugatuck.com

Get Ready for Go Girl! Saugatuck

Mimi Gonzalez may be funny AF, but don't let that distract you from the fact that Mimi is also organized AF — and knows how to throw a party. Case in point: Go Girl! Saugatuck, a three-day, all-women's weekend just two miles from Lake Michigan, jam-packed with comedy, burlesque, drag kings, DJs, workshops, poolside antics and more queer girl energy than you can shake a beach towel at.

"In our eighth year of being the most inclusive of ALL women in or out of the female/femme/feminine, formerly female, newly female spectrum, we believe in radical inclusion," Gonzalez told BTL. "And you'll see it in our guests, our shows, our DJs and our dance floor. The pool's the place to party during the day, and The Dunes Resort's the place to play gay all weekend with the wonderful women of Go Girl! Saugatuck. The weekend closes out on Sunday with a Gospel of YOU Brunch and open mic, followed by that most classic of all Michigan activities — rock hunting at the beach."

Oh. So this will be hilarious *and* wholesome? Count me in.

May 30–June 1, The Dunes Resort (333 Blue Star Hwy., Douglas). Visit gogirlsaugatuck.com for ticket and accommodation info.



Dance in the Garden of Gaga

Ferndale Pride weekend launches with maximum glitter and minimum chill at "Mayhem: Lady Gaga Dance Night." Think sequins, synths and sinners in a Garden of Eden-themed paradise, where Adam and Eve were clearly both named Stefani.

Show up before 11 p.m. and your cover charge disappears like your inhibitions after "Bad Romance" kicks in. Wear your meat dress, bring your Little Monster friends and prepare to sweat out every one of Gaga's eras on the dance floor.

May 30, doors at 9 p.m., Orchid Theatre (141 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale). Free entry before 11 p.m. with RSVP: bit.ly/orchid530.



Roz Hernandez.
Photo: Instagram/@rozhernandez

Roar at Roz Hernandez

Anyone who says "this is no time for making comedy" is welcome to sit quietly in the corner while the rest of us laugh to survive. Transgender comedian/celebrity ghost encounter negotiation expert Roz Hernandez is coming to Detroit for one night only to give us the opportunity to do just that.

You've probably encountered Roz on your tiny screen because she starred in Hulu's 2023 series "Living for the Dead," plus her ear-delight "Ghosted! by Roz Hernandez" was recently a top pick for Apple's Podcast of the Month. But there's nothing like comedy IRL and if you want to hear the person Margaret Cho calls "essential, hilarious, profane and profound!!!" (yes, with every single one of those exclamation points), head to Gigi's on May 16.

Special bonus: Gigi's is historically a drag club, so Roz is honoring the environment by generously agreeing to accept cash tips during her performance. Bring your twenties, tens, fives — even your singles. But not your quarters. Sure, you need them for laundry, but the audience will be seeking comedy, not Coinstar.

May 16, 7:30 p.m., Gigi's Cabaret (16920 West Warren Ave., Detroit). Find tickets at bit.ly/RozHernandezDetroit.

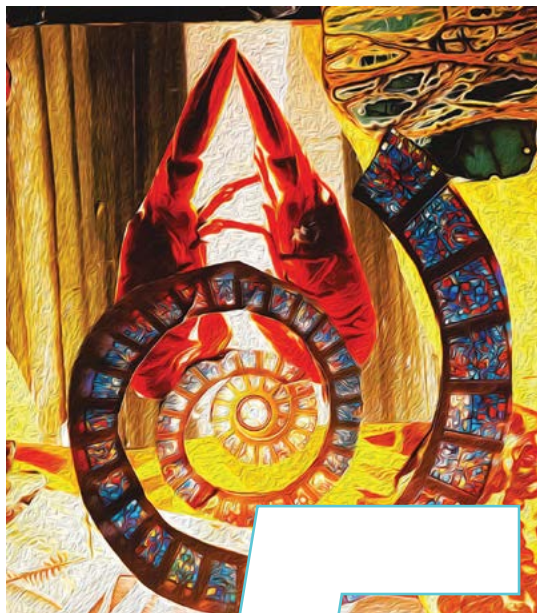


Treasure Trans Health and Wellness

Affirmations, Ferndale's LGBTQ+ community center, is hosting another installment of their Trans Health and Wellness Series, this one centered on gender nonconforming and nonbinary folks. Got questions about sex, mental health or that weird twinge in your shoulder? Experts from all over the health disciplines will be ready with answers. Oakland County Health will be on site for needle exchange support, and the whole thing is powered by community care and donuts (shoutout to Apple Fritter and Red Hook).

Can't make it? Follow Affirmations on socials @goaffirmations for updates, resources and more sugar-fueled support.

May 17, 11 a.m.-2 p.m., Affirmations LGBTQ+ community center (290 W. Nine Mile Road, Ferndale). No registration required. More info at [instagram.com/p/DI3tUhFtOJW](https://www.instagram.com/p/DI3tUhFtOJW).



Shrine of the Medusa chapbook zine from the Allied Media Projects' collection. Photo: alliedmedia.org

Adopt a Queer Zine Habit

One of the most devastating things about the current attacks on LGBTQ+ voices is how quickly our stories are vanishing from mainstream culture. But guess what? We've always told our own stories — loudly, queerly and usually with an almost inexplicable quantity of glitter glue.

Support that legacy by diving into the Detroit-based Allied Media Projects, packed with queer, trans and BIPOC brilliance expressed in various creative forms: zines, blogs, movies, live events and more. You can read many of Allied members' zines for free online or order physical copies to start your own DIY queer archive. Host a zine night or stash one in your local laundromat like the beautiful gay fairy you are.

Explore: alliedmedia.org and @alliedmediaprojects.



Jeremy Moss. Photo: Andrew Potter

Jeremy Moss Defends Trans Rights as He Launches Congressional Campaign

How the Josh Schriver anti-marriage equality showdown shaped Moss's congressional bid

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

Michigan State Sen. Jeremy Moss announced his candidacy May 8 for Michigan's 11th Congressional District, promising to bring the same bold advocacy that has defined his career in state politics to Washington.

Moss, who made history as Michigan's first openly gay state senator, is running for the seat currently held by Democratic Rep. Haley Stevens, who recently announced her candidacy for U.S. Senate to replace retiring Sen. Gary Peters in 2026.

In an interview with BTL

the day before he announced his congressional run, Moss shared his excitement about the campaign and reflected on how his headline-making confrontation with MAGA Republican Rep. Josh Schriver, who serves in the Michigan House, helped propel him toward this decision. The

confrontation happened when Schriver held a press conference in February to call for the federal repeal of same-sex marriage equality.

"I think that's really a moment that actually has driven us to this day right now," Moss told BTL. "You know, I saw an

announcement about the press conference and I said to my team, 'I think I want to go to this. I think I want to watch this circus.'"

Moss described how that impulse turned into a viral

See **Jeremy Moss**, page 22

Pride Across Michigan: Over 40 Fests Ready to Roll, From Marquette to the Motor City

Communities big and small prepare to rally for queer visibility

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

Michigan's Pride season is set to meet the moment in a year marked by growing political attacks on LGBTQ+ rights, with more than 40 celebrations scheduled across the state from May through September. From major city festivals to intimate small-town gatherings, this year's Pride calendar showcases the growing visibility of queer communities throughout Michigan.

"Our community is resilient. We've had incredible individual donors and local businesses step up in meaningful ways, showing that no matter what's happening politically, there are still people who believe in and want to support this work," Jazz McKinney, executive director of Grand Rapids Pride Center, told BTL earlier this year as the organization worked to prepare for its 37th festival, set for June 21-22.

This resilience is reflected in a busy calendar of Pride events ready to unfold statewide.

The festivities begin early with Ferndale Pride on Saturday, May 31. Downtown Ferndale will come alive from 12:30 to 10 p.m. with two entertainment stages — the Planavon Performance Stage hosted by Bentley James featuring multi-instrumentalist Baddie Brooks, and the Woodward Dance Stage keeping the energy high all afternoon.

Julia Music, executive director of Ferndale Pride, strikes a defiant tone about maintaining Pride's core mission. "I don't want the state of the world to take away from what people gain out of the day," she told BTL in March. "People who come to visit Pride need to have the celebration and the feeling that they're supposed to get from Pride, no matter what is happening in the world."

Upper Peninsula Rainbow Pride celebrates its 10th anniversary on June 14 at Marquette's Mattson Lower Harbor Park. This year's poster features a pansy — a



Motor City Pride 2013. Photo: Andrew Potter

reclaimed symbol of queer resilience — designed through a community contest that captures the event's spirit.

Lansing Pride transforms Old Town on June 28 with headliner Adore Delano of "American Idol" and "RuPaul's Drag Race" fame.

LGBT Detroit's Hotter Than July celebrates its 30th anniversary from July 22-26. As Michigan's longest-running Black LGBTQ+ Pride event, the celebration includes a candlelight vigil, reception, film festival and the iconic Palmer Park Picnic.

Smaller communities are well-represented too. The Keweenaw Peninsula hosts its third Pridefest in Calumet on June 7. Holland Pride brightens Centennial Park on June 28, while Buchanan presents "Pride on The Common" on June 29.

Many celebrations feature compelling themes this year. Lowell Pride's "Defy and Amplify" inspires collective queer resilience, while Jackson Pride

rallies under "Equality Now! No Turning Back!"

Transgender Pride in the Park will take place on Aug. 23 in Ferndale, marking the 54th anniversary of the Compton Cafeteria Riots, a crucial pre-Stonewall moment in transgender activism.

The OutCenter of Southwest Michigan has organized a "Pridefest On Tour" series, bringing celebrations to Cass County (June 14), Twin Cities/St. Joseph (June 28), and Michiana/Niles (June 21).

Accessibility improvements feature prominently in 2025, with Ferndale Pride offering sensory-sensitive spaces, Warren City Pride and Grand Rapids Pride providing low-stimulus areas, and multiple festivals installing water bottle refill stations for Michigan's summer heat.

This robust Pride season reflects growing acceptance across Michigan while offering crucial visibility and community

resources. With events spanning from rural communities to urban centers, from the Upper Peninsula to the southern border, Pride 2025 ensures that queer celebration reaches every corner of the state.

Still, many Pride organizations have been met with challenges. "A lot of people are worried about supporting Pride in that way and what it might mean for their business down the line," Abigail Rowe, executive director of Abigail's Pride in Ortonville, set for June 7, told BTL earlier this year about sponsorship difficulties. Organizers like Rowe are leaning into creative solutions and grassroots community support to ensure their events can move forward.

Look out for the full Pride calendar in our next issue, out May 22, just ahead of Ferndale Pride. In the meantime, check out the online version at bit.ly/MichiganPride2025.

Motor City Pride: 'As Important as Ever'

Motor City Pride, Michigan's largest and longest-running Pride celebration, returns to Hart Plaza on June 7-8. The iconic Detroit festival has been making the city sparkle since 1972, marking over five decades of LGBTQ+ visibility in Southeast Michigan.

"The anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric we are seeing around the country reminds us all that we need Pride," David Wait, MCP Chairperson, told BTL. "It is as important as ever to have Pride festivals and marches to advocate for full equality and inclusion for everyone and to support one another. This year, we have allocated more space for people to connect with nonprofit organizations that support our community, and we are allocating more time for an expanded parade with space for more people and groups to march with us."

This year's event promises an enriched festival experience with an expanded history area, where attendees can connect with the powerful legacy of LGBTQ+ movement pioneers. The two-day event transforms Hart Plaza with four stages of live music and performances, creating an atmosphere that draws thousands from across the state and beyond. More than a dozen food vendors will offer everything from vegan options to juicy burgers, ensuring no one celebrates on an empty stomach.

Sunday's highlight is the Pride parade, kicking off at noon from the intersection of Fort and Griswold before winding its way to Hart Plaza. The parade has grown significantly in recent years, featuring community organizations, supportive businesses and elaborate floats celebrating queer identity and pride.

While entertainment wasn't announced ahead of press time, organizers promise updates on the Motor City Pride website. Attendees are encouraged to check the site before attending for practical information on parking options, public transit access and hydration stations — crucial for enjoying Pride comfortably in Detroit's often unpredictable June weather.

As the centerpiece of Michigan's Pride season, Motor City Pride continues to serve as both a joyful celebration and a powerful statement of LGBTQ+ presence and perseverance in the heart of Detroit.

For more, visit motorcitypride.org.

Trans People Are Moving Away From Their Homes ‘In Case of a Handmaid’s Tale Situation’

Michigan emerges as a refuge in anti-trans era

BY JORDYN BRADLEY

With trans rights under fire virtually everywhere in the U.S. following the swearing-in of Donald Trump — and Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton actively seeking out identification data of trans individuals for years, including names and driver’s license numbers — Kennidi Monroe says her desire to leave her home state has been a long time coming.

“Since I knew that we might have a president who wants to essentially exterminate trans people, I knew I wanted to get closer to the Canadian border in case we end up in a ‘Handmaid’s Tale’ situation,” Monroe tells BTL.

Monroe hopes to move to Michigan from Texas with her husband, Trevor, and six pets despite not knowing a soul here. She’s not alone. Outside of moving to states deemed safer, many trans Americans are also contemplating or actively planning to move out of the country to ensure their rights are protected and safe, their healthcare coverage continues and their identities are validated.

Roz Keith, the executive director and founder of Stand with Trans, says she’s talked with multiple trans people and their families considering relocation following the re-election of Trump and recent policy changes affecting the trans community.

“I know there are families that are even thinking of leaving Michigan because supportive states — states that have been providing gender-affirming care, that have adolescent gender clinics and are seeing trans adults — are canceling appointments and halting care. I haven’t heard specifically of that happening yet in Michigan, but I’m holding my breath,” Keith tells BTL.

Gov. Gretchen Whitmer and her administration have actively made strides to ensure Michigan’s LGBTQ+ community feels seen, heard and protected here. In January, Whitmer ordered state departments to review recent federal executive orders against DEI and transgender policies.

Additionally, throughout her tenure as governor, Whitmer established the state’s

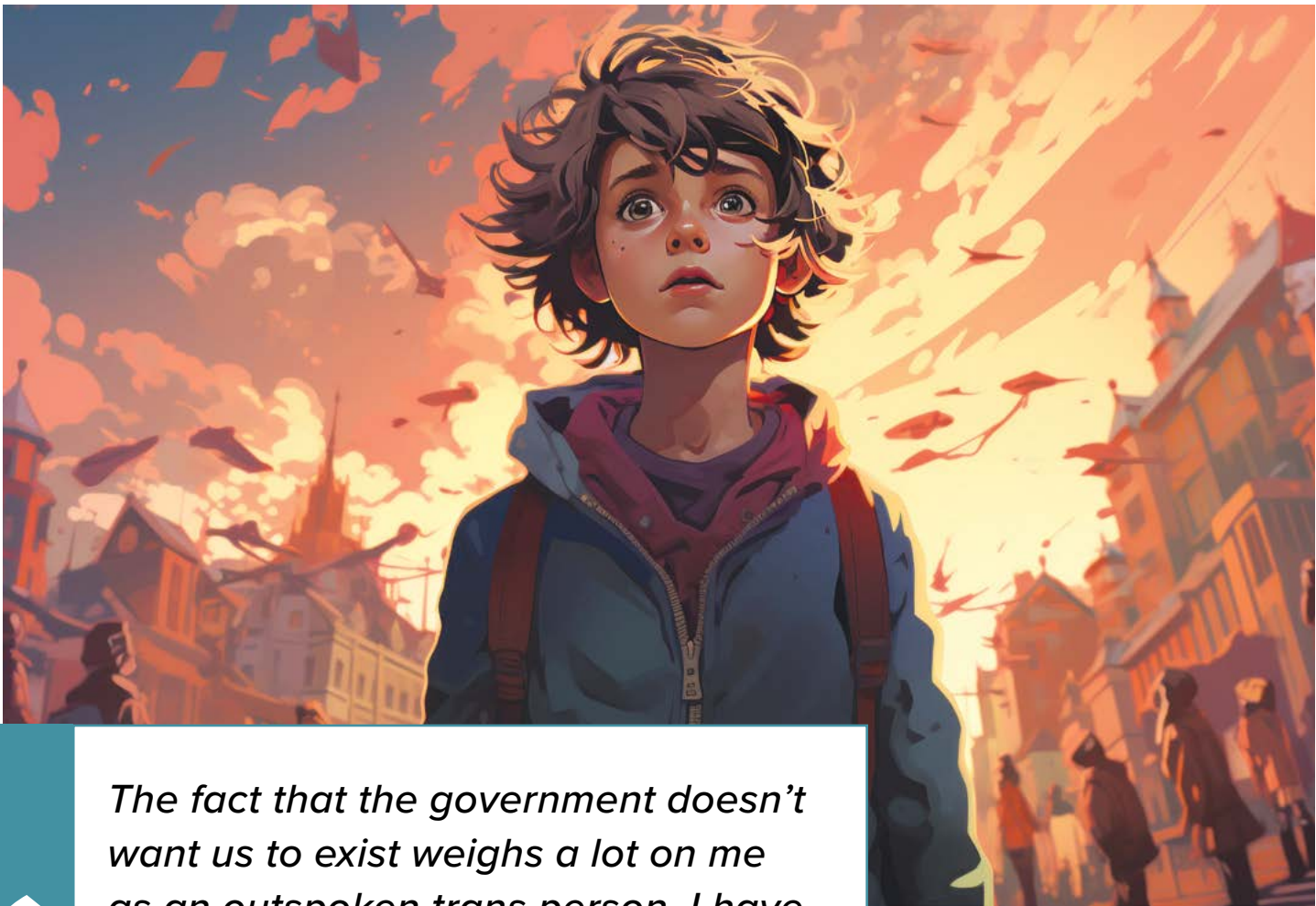


Illustration by Budi

“

The fact that the government doesn’t want us to exist weighs a lot on me as an outspoken trans person. I have to speak out on issues, but also understand my own mental health in the process. — Kennidi Monroe

first-ever LGBTQ+ commission, amended the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act to reaffirm and expand protections for sexual orientation, gender identity and gender expression (ensuring no one can be fired from their jobs or evicted from their home for how they identify), opposed and vetoed any anti-trans legislation that has made it to her desk, vetoed anti-trans budget language that sought to deny gender-affirming healthcare and banned conversion therapy. In an interview with BTL last year, Whitmer said she will continue to work with other members in office to ensure “that we are a state that the LGBTQ+ community can point to across the country as a state that’s doing more, that’s doing it right and that is drawing people into our state because of

our work here.”

Compared to Texas, Michigan is clearly a safer option for many trans community members. But the reality is that it’s not as simple as picking up and fleeing to a safer space, whether across the country or the world.

Monroe works paycheck to paycheck as a transportation manager with Amazon. She supports herself and her husband, who is disabled, while trying to save for the move, secure housing and ensure her job will relocate her to Detroit. She says she is also currently renting out a storage pod to hold their belongings in, so once they can leave, they can do so quickly.

“It’s hard to do it on a whim and it’s hard to move if you don’t have good credit. So

we’re at a bit of a standstill,” says Monroe.

Still, she and her husband are determined to get to Michigan, even if money is what’s holding them back. She created a GoFundMe (“Donate to Kennidi and Trevor’s Move for Safety”) to try and raise funds to move quicker and also has an online store, Kennedi Co., where she sells shirts, stickers, soaps and more.

“The difficult thing is that most families do not just have the resources to up and move. That’s a problem, whether you’re thinking of moving to a different state or country. And you can’t just up and move to a new country. That takes a lot of planning that doesn’t just happen in a day. You have to think about the documents and visas and living situations and making a living. Are you able to just transfer and do your work? How are you providing for your family? Those are not overnight moves and decisions,” says Keith.

“I think a lot of people joked ‘If this

See **Michigan Relocation**, page 26

Michigan Universities Split on Trump DEI Order as LGBTQ+ Students Face Pressures

UM president resigns amid backlash while MSU joins resistance coalition

BY BLAKE DAVID

While Michigan State joins a Big Ten resistance coalition defending diversity programs, the University of Michigan's president, Santa Ono, is heading for the exits — leaving behind a dismantled DEI office and a campus divided over Trump's executive order targeting equity initiatives.

In a letter published on the Office of the President's website, Ono states that he made this choice due to interviewing and being selected to serve as the president for the University of Florida, but for the many students and faculty who have pressed Ono and the university to stand up against Trump's attacks on DEI, his departure is a clear victory.

The divergent responses from Michigan's major universities to Trump's "Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing" order have created a stark divide in how LGBTQ+ students experience campus life. Signed on Trump's first day in office, the vaguely worded directive has prompted some institutions to dismantle support systems overnight while others join resistance efforts.

At the University of Michigan, the response has been swift and severe. In late March, the university released a letter announcing it would discontinue its DEI 2.0 program, end diversity statements in faculty hiring and re-evaluate all programs for "compliance with federal executive orders." The university's web page on DEI no longer exists, redirecting instead to their generic homepage.

Most dramatically, UM closed its Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, sparking major backlash from faculty and students.

The university's actions have created a campus climate of fear and confusion. In January, administrators sent contradictory messages about Immigration and Customs Enforcement presence on campus.

"They sent out an email about ICE being on campus, making students aware that ICE can't enter buildings," recalled Jackie "Morena" Moreno, a student and former editor of the Michigan Gayly, an LGBTQ+ publication at UM. "Not even a week later, a second email went out and was like, actually correction, fuck all that, ICE can go in the buildings because



University of Michigan Law School library.

UM is a public university. They also totally erased everything about 'we care about your safety.'"

"Nobody really knows what they're doing and the abuse of power is crazy to me," Moreno told BTL. "There was an emergency meeting that I didn't know was happening and I got an email that was like, 'Hey, we're taking a new direction here,' but it's like there is no new direction — it's just erasure."

Meanwhile, Michigan State University has taken a markedly different approach. At the first Board of Trustees meeting of 2025, President Kevin Guskiewicz promised the university would stand in support of its diverse student population. Despite some initial uncertainty — including the cancellation of a "Future of DEI Policy at MSU" panel and a Lunar New Year event — Guskiewicz has reaffirmed his commitment to equity and inclusion.

MSU's inclusion website remains publicly available, drawing stark contrast to UM's vanished DEI page. Angela Wilson, the UM faculty board's liaison, spent her entire testimony at the first board meeting sharing concerns and fears from students and faculty.

For students working in grant-funded programs, the executive order has created particular uncertainty. One student affiliated with UM, who wished to remain anonymous, described how his organization's unique funding structure — privately funded by a nonprofit foundation but housed within the university — left them in limbo.

"It's unclear about how specifically it is ever going to impact my organization," he said. "What is the jurisdiction here?"

He also challenged the order's characterization of DEI programs as "wasteful,"

See **Michigan DEI**, page 17

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Stand with Trans at the Motor City Pride parade in 2024. Courtesy photo

Stand with Trans Pledges Joyful Resilience on 10th Anniversary

Michigan-based youth support organization celebrates community victories amid legislative challenges

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

In the face of unprecedented legislative attacks on transgender rights, Stand with Trans founder Roz Keith sees the organization's 10-year anniversary gala, which takes place May 17, as a powerful moment of celebration and joy.

"I strongly believe that a decade doing this work — reflecting on so much change and so much progress — needs to be celebrated," Keith says. "And yes, as a country, the community is under attack, and trans people are under attack. However, I know how powerful this community is."

Described as not "just an event" but a "national movement," the organization's Love Transcends gala will mark Stand with Trans'

decade of service to the transgender community. Two prominent national trans advocates will headline the event: bestselling author and nonbinary activist Jeffrey Marsh and Mila Jam. Marsh, who was the first nonbinary public figure to appear on national television, has been a trailblazer for gender inclusivity and self-love. His empowering TikTok videos have received over three billion views. Jam, a celebrated singer, actress and activist, is the Senior Advisor of Global Trans Initiatives at Out Leadership. A powerful voice in the LGBTQ+ community, she continues to use her platform to uplift and advocate for transgender individuals.

The gala, which features entertainment and a silent auction,

will also honor champions of the trans community, including Keith and Emme Zanotti, senior director at Equality Michigan, who will receive the Founder's Award. Barbara Shumer, retired public librarian and past board member, will be presented with the Allyship Award.

Since its founding in 2015, Stand with Trans has evolved from a small Metro Detroit support group into a national lifeline for transgender youth and their families. As anti-transgender bills continue to emerge in Michigan and across the country, the organization's mission has never been more crucial — or more impactful.

"We had a parent workshop recently in Washtenaw County, and at the end of the workshop, one of

the dads who attended came up to me and said, 'We've been coming to Stand with Trans events and programs for several years now, and finding the parent support group saved our lives,'" Keith shares.

The journey over the past decade has been marked by both significant progress and growing challenges. "It's an interesting path when you look at where we were 10-12 years ago and how hard everyone fought to create access to care, and now we're fighting to save that access," Keith reflects. "It is disheartening to look at how hard everybody worked to get to this point, only to feel like our fingers are slipping off the ledge."

Despite these challenges, Stand with Trans continues to expand its services. Last October, the

organization launched a virtual and in-person therapy program that has quickly grown to meet community needs.

Keith's son Hunter, whose coming out as transgender in 2013 ultimately led to the creation of Stand with Trans, has spoken about the isolation he felt as one of the only openly transgender teens he knew. "Not having a support network of people my age or even a little bit older [so] that I could see I have a future was really hard," he told BTL earlier this year.

"This is lifesaving care," Keith says. "Our practice started with a grant from the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services. Now

See **Stand with Trans**, page 19

Stitching Liberation: Michigan Artist Weaves Trans Joy Into National Quilt Monument

Grand Rapids creator contributes personal vision to ACLU’s ‘Freedom To Be’ WorldPride installation

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

With each careful stitch, Theo Randall threads defiance through fabric. Their needlework speaks volumes in a nation where transgender existence has become increasingly politicized, with over 80 anti-trans laws passed in the U.S. since 2020. The independent artist from Grand Rapids is among hundreds of transgender Americans whose quilts will spell out a powerful message on the National Mall this May: Freedom To Be.

“Growing up in a more conservative area gave me a different perspective on what it means to be visibly trans,” Randall recently told BTL. “In Grand Rapids, I’ve found a vibrant transgender community that celebrates our existence in ways I never imagined possible as a young person.”

Randall completed their 6-foot-by-6-foot quilt panel in mid-February for the ACLU’s upcoming installation in Washington, D.C. The monument, featuring 258 panels created by transgender individuals and allies nationwide, will kick off WorldPride on May 17 with a public unveiling.

The project began in spring 2024 with a deceptively simple prompt: What does freedom

mean to you? For Randall, it presented an opportunity to showcase transgender joy rather than centering on the challenges faced by the community. “The Midwest often gets overlooked in national conversations about queer and trans communities,” Randall noted. “But we have our own unique experiences and expressions of joy that deserve to be part of this national tapestry.”

The timing of Randall’s contribution holds particular significance as transgender Americans await a landmark Supreme Court decision in *U.S. v. Skrmetti*, a case that could shape transgender rights for a generation. The case challenges Tennessee’s ban on gender-affirming medical care for transgender youth. Chase Strangio, the ACLU’s co-director of the LGBTQ+ & HIV Project, recently argued before the Court in this case.

Project organizers provided participants with basic quilt



Theo Randall. Courtesy photo



Theo’s Randall’s quilt square. Courtesy photo

panels as starting points. Randall and others transformed these foundations through various techniques including hand-

stitching, paint, ink, stencils and mixed media. This approach has resulted in a diverse collection reflecting varied experiences,

heritages, faiths and communities. The ACLU’s quilt project draws

See **Trans Quilt**, page 24



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Pride 2025 Reveals True LGBTQ+ Allies



BY D'ANNE WITKOWSKI

Pride Month is fast approaching, and Pride events nationwide are watching the corporate sponsorships they have been able to count on in the past dry up like they've been hit with a giant rainbow ShamWow.

For example, San Francisco Pride "is dealing with the potential loss of \$300,000 in corporate sponsorship for its hugely popular annual parade, funding needed ahead of June's Pride Month. Multiyear sponsors, including Comcast, Anheuser-Busch and Diageo, have all backed away from participating," according to USA Today.

It's not a huge mystery why this is happening.

"Intent on staying out of the [Trump Administration's] crosshairs, many big brands are backing away from LGBTQ+ celebrations of all sizes as part of a broader rollback of diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, leaving organizers from coast to coast," reports the Washington Post, "with budget shortfalls at a time when most are anticipating higher turnout, as well as facing heightened safety and logistical challenges."

In other words, at the same time the Trump Administration's anti-LGBTQ+ crusade emboldens people who may want to enact violence on our community, he's also scared away the funding that helps to ensure Pride events are not only fun,



setting us up for a doll shortage at Christmas are proving that Republicans — who have the power in Congress to stop him but are choosing not to do that — were not exactly a safe bet.

Then there's DEI itself. I am all for companies working on being more diverse, more equitable and more inclusive for women, Black and brown people, people with disabilities, LGBTQ+ people and other historically marginalized communities. It's good for business! However, for a lot of companies, DEI was only surface deep. They didn't exactly have a moral commitment to it, which was made clear by the number of companies that threw all things DEI in the trash as soon as Trump said, "Boo" (hi, Target).

Corporate support for LGBTQ+ people is obviously part of the DEI universe. Again, it's telling how quickly some corporations have folded

under the bigoted scrutiny of the Trump Administration.

People, myself included, have long complained about "rainbow washing," which Fair Planet defines as "the practice of using rainbow-themed symbolism in branding, advertising, merchandise or social media, ostensibly in solidarity with LGBTQ+ people during Pride month, but without active support of LGBTQ+ people's identities or rights."

Selling rainbow flip flops, beach towels and t-shirts doesn't mean that the purveyor of those goods isn't also

donating to Senator Anti-Trans, something that has far deeper implications for LGBTQ+ lives than merch. And I'm not going to lie. I am literally writing this while draped in a rainbow blanket that I bought from Kohl's after Pride for less than \$10.

I like seeing displays of rainbow and trans flag colors at normie places. It feels good. But it doesn't necessarily do good.

Even the support of Pride events, which many corporations have shelled out big bucks for in the past, pales in comparison to the amount of money these corporations spend to get anti-LGBTQ+ candidates elected.

Fear of being targeted by an increasingly unhinged president isn't the only factor making Pride sponsors nervous. GLAAD President and CEO Sarah Kate Ellis told USA Today that "tariffs and other economic challenges have driven the recent pullbacks" and that "most companies are not scaling back this year."

"As companies are getting squeezed, they're squeezing all the other places where they market," Ellis said.

To which I say, of course. But that doesn't explain the sponsors who are still in the game but don't want their logos visible in any way that could tie them to the Pride events they're ostensibly "supporting."

This really is a time when LGBTQ+ people are going to see who our real friends are. And those are the folks who are not only sponsoring Pride events, but who are also refusing to cave on DEI because they see it as more than just a buzzword (or buzz acronym, if you will) and not helping to usher bigots into office.

At the end of the day, the LGBTQ+ community has each other and the actual people who love and care about us. And you can't put a price on that.

“

I like seeing displays of rainbow and trans flag colors at normie places. It feels good. But it doesn't necessarily do good.

but also safe.

Look, corporations might be scared to piss off Trump right now, but they also did this to themselves. Corporations and the people who profit from them frequently make big campaign contributions to Republican candidates under the belief that Republicans are better for the economy (they are not). Now, Trump's war on diversity, equity and inclusion (which, I will never tire of saying, are ALL GOOD THINGS) and his obsession with tariffs tanking the stock market and

THE SCROLL

QUICK HITS & CAN'T MISSES

Michigan Republicans Target Trans Youth

Michigan Republicans introduced a three-bill legislative package in early May that would ban gender-affirming care for transgender youth, penalize medical providers and require insurance coverage for “detransition” procedures.

Senate Bills 289-291 and matching House bills would prohibit healthcare professionals from providing puberty blockers, hormone therapy or any gender-affirming treatment to minors. The legislation would also revoke medical licenses for providers who violate the ban and allow people to sue for damages up to 20 years after receiving care.

The bills join House Bill 4190, introduced in March, as part of broader Republican efforts to restrict transgender

rights in Michigan. Republicans have also introduced an anti-trans sports bill, though there are no registered trans high school students playing sports in Michigan.

“This legislation is based on lies and ignores science to try and take away essential, life-saving care,” Equality Michigan said in a statement. “Transgender healthcare for young people is safe, evidence-based and supported by every major medical association in the country.”

Gender-affirming care is recognized as medically necessary by major medical organizations, including the American Medical Association and American Academy of Pediatrics. Research shows access to appropriate healthcare significantly reduces depression, anxiety and suicide risk among transgender youth.

Equality Michigan is collecting petition signatures at bit.ly/migacp.



WorldPride Arrives in DC Amid Political Challenges

Despite unprecedented legislative attacks on the LGBTQ+ community from the Trump administration, WorldPride 2025 — The Fabric of Freedom — is set to transform Washington, D.C., from May 17 to June 8, celebrating 50 years of Capital Pride and drawing Pridegoers from all over the globe.

The international festival features superstar headliners including Shakira, Jennifer Lopez, Troye Sivan and RuPaul, alongside a human rights conference, film festival, sports events and a massive parade down Constitution Avenue.

The celebration includes specialized events like D.C. Black Pride, Trans Pride and Latinx Pride, plus a two-day music festival organizers promise will be the ultimate global dance party. Visit worldpridedc.org to learn more.



Margaret Qualley in ‘Honey Don’t!’ Photo: Apple

UM Stands Firm on Lavender Graduation as Other Schools Cancel

The University of Michigan proudly continued its 31st annual Lavender Graduation in 2025, celebrating over 200 LGBTQ+ graduates, even as

other universities canceled their ceremonies amid anti-DEI pressures. The University of Louisville canceled its ceremony less than 24 hours before the scheduled event, citing state and federal directives against diversity programs. The University of Kentucky also canceled its Lavender Graduation and two other identity-based ceremonies, as did several other universities nationwide.

UM’s decision maintains the tradition that Dr. Ronni Sanlo created there in 1995. Sanlo

founded the first-ever Lavender Graduation after experiencing discrimination that prevented her from attending her own children’s graduations after she lost custody due to her orientation.

“These ceremonies are about visibility,” Sanlo told BTL. “For many students, especially those from less accepting backgrounds, it might be the first time they’re celebrated authentically for who they are.” Since its inception at Michigan, the tradition has spread to over 500 schools nationwide.

PRISM Men’s Chorus Brings Broadway Hits to Macomb

Don’t miss PRISM Men’s Chorus when they bring Broadway’s biggest hits from the last 25 years to Macomb Center for the Performing Arts on May 30. “PRISM: Broadway Bangers” features beloved songs from “Wicked,” “Hairspray,” “Hamilton” and more. Whether you’re a musical-theater superfan or curious newcomer, PRISM’s powerful voices promise an unforgettable evening that captures the energy of a Tony Awards ceremony. Get tickets at bit.ly/42U3Am5.

Get Your ‘Drag Race All Stars’ Fix

What’s better than keeping up on “All Stars” Season 10, which features the largest cast in franchise history? Watching the queens werk while surrounded by a crew of new besties who understand your sincere enthusiasm.

It’s a good thing BTL is tracking watch parties all over the state! Visit bit.ly/42U3Am5 to find a party near you — but, please, keep the catfights at home (or take them to the stage, secret queen).

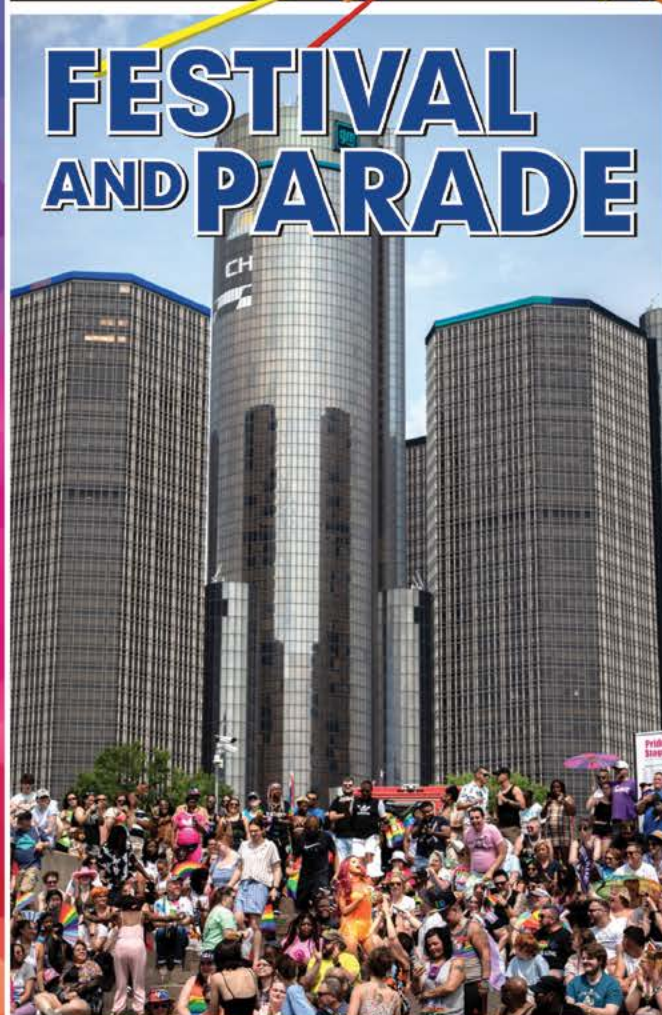
‘Honey Don’t!’? More like ‘Honey DO!’

The just-released trailer for Ethan Coen and Tricia Cooke’s sapphic thriller features Margaret Qualley as private eye Honey O’Donahue investigating bizarre deaths linked to a cult. Aubrey Plaza plays a flirty cop (her first line? “Love those click-clacking heels”). The chemistry-filled preview sent queer social media into overdrive, with fans dissecting every lingering look. After “Drive-Away Dolls,” the flick promises another delicious lesbian noir. Coming soon to Apple TV+.

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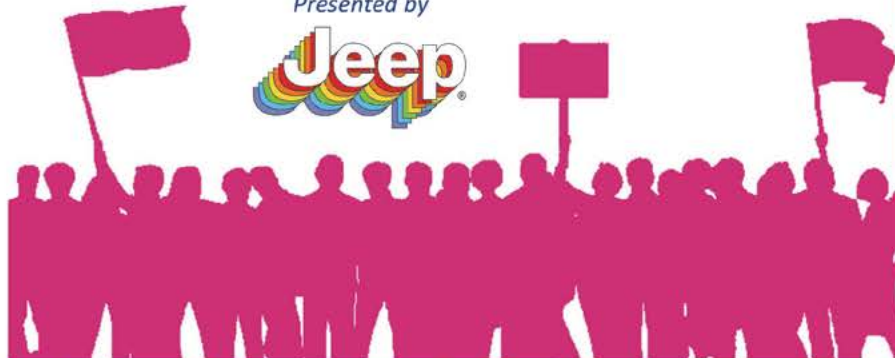
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Miss Trans Michigan Baddie Brooks Is Taking Over Pride Season

Michigan's own talented multi-hyphenate prepares for multiple Pride gigs as she releases powerful new music

BY SARAH BRICKER HUNT

We're past the point where we can say Baddie Brooks is having "a moment." In truth, Brooks is having several moments, and she's been having them for a while now — somehow, it's been two years since she first headlined Ferndale Pride and she has yet to stop building on that momentum. It's safe to say Brooks has not only arrived, she's fully launched.

The Detroit-born musician and activist, who made history last summer as the first Black transgender woman from Detroit to serve as a Grand Marshal in the New York City Pride March, is looking ahead to a dizzying performance schedule in the latter half of 2025. Brooks, who graduated from Eastern Michigan University as a classically trained musician specializing in trumpet and euphonium performance, is preparing for appearances at multiple Pride festivals this summer, headlining Pride fests in Ferndale (May 31), Kalamazoo (June 6-7) and Ypsilanti (June 6), where she'll be performing with her live instrumental ensemble.

As Miss Trans Michigan 2025, Brooks will also compete in the Miss Trans USA pageant this November, using her growing platform to advocate for transgender rights and increased allyship within the LGBTQ+ community. We recently caught up with Brooks to discuss her upcoming projects and what drives her activism.

You have several Pride performances lined up this summer. What can audiences expect from your shows?

These performances will showcase both my original music and covers, including my new single. My performances are always high-energy and designed to get people dancing and moving. I'm bringing my trumpet and euphonium skills to the stage as well, so audiences will get to experience the full range of my musical abilities. It's about energy, being together and feeling the moment together

Your new single, "Game Over," addresses dating as a Black trans woman. Can you tell us more about

the inspiration behind the song?

"Game Over" addresses my experiences with dating as a Black trans woman and the challenges I've faced. The song calls out disrespectful treatment while also reclaiming my power and confidence. The accompanying music video will feature a video game theme and portray me in a confident and empowered role.

The song is really making a statement that Black trans women deserve to be loved and protected, and that we're not fetishes or toys to be picked up and played with whenever someone feels like it.

You're currently Miss Trans Michigan and will be competing in Miss Trans USA later this year. What does this opportunity mean to you?

It's an incredible opportunity to network with other transgender individuals, engage in advocacy and connect with the wider queer community on a national level. The Miss Trans USA competition takes place from November 12-16, and I'm already preparing for it. Being Miss Trans Michigan has given me a platform to advocate for our community, and competing nationally will only amplify that voice. It's about representation, showing that trans women can achieve their dreams and inspiring others to do the same.

Last year, you made history as the first Black transgender woman from Detroit to serve as a Grand Marshal in the NYC Pride March. How did that experience shape your advocacy work?

That experience was truly life-changing. Meeting giants in our community like Miss Major, Michelle Visage and Raquel Willis showed me what's possible when we use our platforms for good. I never imagined myself in this position when I was younger — I never even imagined coming out. Being recognized at that level has motivated me to work even harder for my community. It pushed me to continue advocating for protections for trans and queer youth, especially in today's political climate. That experience confirmed that I'm on the right



Baddie Brooks. Photo: Carlito Clips

path and that my voice matters.

You've emphasized the importance of allyship for the transgender community. How can allies better support trans individuals in today's political climate?

Allies need to be more vocal in their support, both online and offline. It's not enough to silently support — we need people to

actively stand up against discrimination and bigotry. This means educating themselves, correcting misinformation when they hear it, supporting trans-owned businesses, attending events and using their platforms to amplify trans voices. In today's political climate where trans rights are being targeted, allies stepping up alongside us is more important than ever. We need people to fight with us, not just for us.

noting that “the budget for the first five years Michigan began investing in DEI programs, all of the money put towards these each year was less than 1% of [the university’s] annual operating costs.”

The divided responses have led to organized resistance. In late April, UM’s Faculty Senate voted to join the Big Ten Mutual Defense Compact, a coalition including Rutgers, Indiana University, the University of Nebraska and MSU fighting against Trump’s attacks on higher education. The Senate also passed a motion urging university leadership to retain the DEI office and rehire terminated employees.

The university justified their decisions due to fears of losing federal funding, as threatened by the executive order and two other executive orders: “Ending Illegal Discrimination and Restoring Merit-Based Opportunity” and “Improving Education Outcomes by Empowering Parents, States, and Communities.”

In their letter, the university promised to maintain support through new approaches, including expanding the Go Blue Guarantee to benefit students from families earning less than \$125,000 annually and increasing mental health resources.

The atmosphere of uncertainty has particularly affected LGBTQ+ student media. Moreno explained that writers and editors at the Michigan Gayly have felt pressured to remove their work from the publication’s website and social media, creating a chilling effect on queer voices on campus.

“Within the past few weeks, I’ve had to delete multiple social media posts,” Moreno said, describing how the climate has impacted student journalism. “What actually breaks my heart is that you have people who so want to be involved with things like the Gayly; they’re committed to it, they write amazing pieces of personal and research-based work, you publish it and you’re both ecstatic.”

But the changing campus environment has made students cautious about their visibility. The silencing has accelerated dramatically in recent weeks, creating what Moreno describes as an atmosphere of self-censorship among LGBTQ+ student journalists.

Jay Kaplan, staff attorney for the ACLU’s LGBT Rights Project, emphasized the importance of collective action and questioning institutional decisions.

“I was heartened to see that Michigan State University and other colleges are banding together,” Kaplan told BTL. “When you coalesce on an individualized basis, you don’t have that same kind of strength.”

He encouraged people to demand transparency from institutions making cuts. “I think sometimes when we see entities that are caving in, we need to ask why? What was the threat that was coming to you? Are you being investigated? What’s the rationale?”

Kaplan emphasized that executive orders

have limitations. “The president is not king, or dictator, nor does he control appropriations — which is in the purview of the Legislature. An executive order can’t undo court decisions, they can’t undo federal civil rights laws, and they can’t undo state civil rights laws.”

Emme Zanotti, senior director of movement building and political affairs at Equality Michigan, emphasized the importance of both organized resistance and personal resilience.

“There’s no silver bullet for resistance,” Zanotti said. “Resistance is also just waking up and doing a bunch of little things every single day to keep chopping at it and making progress. And that includes actually taking care of yourself.”

She highlighted the National Association of Social Workers LGBTQ+Healthcare Directory as a resource, acknowledging the emotional toll on the community. But she also stressed the importance of showing up in everyday spaces.

“We can’t let people erase us or deny our existence, because we are the people you’re chatting in line with at the grocery store or pumping gas next to,” Zanotti said.

As formal support structures disappear, informal networks of solidarity have strengthened. Moreno reflected on how community has become essential for survival.

“It’s exhausting, to be honest, but at the same time, I have a really good support system,” she said. “Even just getting dinner or making dinner together and having that community together is really special to me. Even if we talk about these things at the table, it feels safer.”

For Moreno, the division on campus has become clear: “There’s the University of Michigan administration on one side and students on the other. It’s become an ‘us versus them’ situation. And in this division, ‘them’ is clearly anyone who isn’t a white, cis man.”

Despite the challenges, Moreno finds strength in collective resistance. “You’re looking around, your people are still here regardless of what’s going on, and we still have each other,” she said. “And I think relying on that and people around you is what’s going to get us through this.”

The battle lines have been drawn across Michigan campuses with no resolution in sight. While MSU joins a coalition of resistance with other Big Ten schools, UM’s dismantling of its DEI infrastructure sends a chilling message to marginalized students. This varied response isn’t accidental — the executive order’s vague language and sweeping demands create precisely the kind of institutional confusion that weakens united resistance.

For Michigan’s LGBTQ+ community, the reality is stark: Support systems built over decades are being systematically dismantled under the guise of fighting “waste.” Yet as formal structures disappear, informal networks of solidarity have strengthened. This may be the most powerful form of resistance to an order designed to isolate vulnerable students.



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WHERE ARE THEY NOW?

Carole Hoke, Longtime LGBTQ+ Activist and Illinois Clergy

BY DREW SAUNDERS

Every person's journey is different, and this is especially true for queer people. But there might be a happy Hollywood ending for the LGBTQ+ activist: to come out, become comfortable in your own skin, get involved in social justice organizing, become a leader, accomplish something good and lasting for the community, get married at some point and then retire happily.

Carole Hoke is living a version of that life. A lesbian who started

out with a column advocating for LGBTQ+ causes in the 1980s, Hoke has traveled the path from Michigan activist to retired United Church of Christ clergy in Peoria, Illinois. Now approaching their 80th birthday and celebrating 27 years with their spouse Lauren, Hoke continues to advocate for equality and justice through their words, beliefs and actions.

BTL caught up with Hoke to discuss their Michigan roots, their continuing passion for advocacy and the wisdom they've gained along the way.

What was your experience like working with the Detroit Area Gay and Lesbian Council in the early '80s?

[BTL columnist] Charles Alexander was my introduction to the Detroit Area Gay/Lesbian Council. I owe much to Charles' mentorship and guidance throughout the years. The column I wrote, "Over and Out," was Charles' inspiration. It was truly the greatest networking experience of my life — even to this day.

DAG/LC, being an organization of organizations, was new to me, but served the community by coordinating event calendars so people and groups wouldn't schedule conflicting events. This created opportunities for everyone to participate fully in LGBTQ+ events and opened doors for me, putting me in the right place at the right time for many important moments.

I was able to participate in a "hot topics" class at Macomb Community College led by a rabbi, where we discussed homosexuality alongside other controversial subjects. I was part of the media response team during the first hate crimes legislation discussions, where I faced challenging questions from reporters attempting to throw off our panel, which included Jeff Montgomery, Charles and myself.

Meanwhile, the HIV/AIDS crisis was intensifying. We were losing community members at an accelerating rate, and there were so many questions about treatments, disease progression and life expectancy. The community came together to honor each life lost while also supporting events

like PrideFest through DAG/LC's coordinated efforts, with everyone working together to create successful annual events.

What are some of your favorite memories from your time as an advocate in Michigan?

One of my greatest memories was a fundraiser for Michigan Organization for Human Rights with two concerts, one in East Lansing and one in the Detroit with musicians Cris Williamson, Holly Near and Tret Fure. Another highlight was meeting with U.S. Senator Carl Levin on a couple of different occasions to lobby for laws that would protect LGBTQ+ people. The meeting went well, and we definitely got our points across and left the senator with a lot to think about, not that it would come to fruition. Still, any time we can plant a seed, we have laid the groundwork for plans to bloom.

How would you compare today's LGBTQ+ advocacy challenges with those you faced decades ago?

The urgency of need. I had an "ally" parishioner once ask me, "Why do people [LGBTQ+] want everything right now?" I tried my best to help her understand that what feels like "right now" to her may be a lifetime or more for a person like me. People for the most part, as allies, today, are more engaged and tend to be better informed than they were in the early years. There is still more to do. Our transgender friends still are horribly misunderstood, as are many bisexual folks.

Allies still tend to "group" our community into the "gay" community, as if we were all on the same page. Many still think it is enough to be nice and tolerant of all members of the community. But there is a huge difference in tolerating and being fully accepting. Our transgender members are still often not fully included, bisexuality is not necessarily accepted and the growing "alphabet" of gender identity, gender expression and sexuality is in need of further inclusion.

Unless and until allies fully understand what our terms mean and what our differences are, there will always be a rift.

What lessons have unsuccessful advocacy attempts taught you about perseverance?

You are always planting seeds. Just because you think you have not had an influence on someone or a group, you may have impacted them more than you realize. It is important to know that not everyone will be receptive and that is OK. Tell your story, let your story stand and maybe, just maybe, someone hearing your words will then share your story with others. Ultimately, change will come.

When working on a city ordinance in Peoria, Illinois, to include LGBTQ+ for fair employment and housing, gaining support from the council members was difficult. After a city council meeting where several of us spoke openly and honestly, the ordinance passed. What I learned from that is that one should never, ever give up. One must keep on going. One must keep pressing on for hope,

justice and equality.

What common mistakes should advocates avoid when engaging with people who hold anti-LGBTQ+ views?

The first mistake is to assume you know their story; that you know what they expect to hear. You may have a completely canned response to the homophobic or transphobic lies, but each person is different. You don't have all the answers.

If their arguments are scripture, never agree to discuss scripture — it is personal and every person has their own perspective. It only gets ugly and won't lead anywhere.

What are you doing now and how has your advocacy evolved?

My spouse and I currently live in Peoria, Illinois. Lauren and I have been together for 27 years and legally married for 14 years. I am a retired United Church of Christ clergy person. I continue to be active in ministry and advocacy.

As I approach my 80th birthday, I still march for equality and justice. Even though my last physical march may have been the March on Washington in 2017, I still march with my words, beliefs and actions. Frequently, I am invited to speak at public events for peace and justice. The most recent event was the Peoria County Bar Association's Lincoln Memorial Banquet.

I believe passionately that the most important aspect of any successful life of advocacy is relationship-building, listening and authenticity.



Carole Hoke with family, friends and members of her faith community. Courtesy photos

◀ Stand with Trans

Continued from page 10

I'm really happy to say that our therapist, who is full-time, has just about a full caseload. Our director of clinical services is also seeing clients. We're paneled in many insurances, and we also have a sliding scale if folks don't have insurance and need some relief."

For Dubbs Weinblatt, who coordinates Stand with Trans' annual Trans Empowerment Month each October, community connection is essential. "Getting to spend as much time with other queer and trans people as possible is crucial for survival," says Weinblatt. Weinblatt first connected with Keith in 2017 through their work at Keshet, a national nonprofit focused on LGBTQ+ inclusion in Jewish institutions.

"I was really blown away by her passion as a mom and as an ally in supporting her son and the trans community as a whole," Weinblatt says.

For parents like Jill Forbis, who first connected with Stand with Trans nearly five years ago when her son came out at age 18, the organization has been a crucial resource.

"It's always been super important and helpful, not just for the trans youth, but for the parents, and also just helping to gain better support and understanding from the community at large," Forbis says.

Forbis, who identifies as queer, says that while accepting her son's transition wasn't a challenge for her, she needed guidance on practical matters like insurance coverage and finding affirming caregivers. She attended a parent support group to learn how such groups operate, which inspired her to start a similar group at her workplace.

Keith emphasizes that comprehensive care extends far beyond medical interventions. "Gender-affirming care is not just about writing a prescription," she explains. "It's making sure that trans people have access to therapists who understand what they're going through, who are trained in working with the trans community. It's making sure that family doctors and pediatricians and primary care physicians know what it means to have a patient who is transgender just so they can be affirming in their practice, even if they're just there for a sore throat."

For 17-year-old Augusten Lagrou, a member of the Stand with Trans Youth Advisory Board, the organization provides crucial opportunities for advocacy and connection.

"To me, it's been a really good opportunity to meet with other youth who are into advocacy and who want to make a difference," Lagrou says. "And we can kind of rely on each other."

Lagrou joined the inaugural Youth Advisory Board over a year ago. The board, comprised of middle school through college-aged members

and led by two Stand with Trans staff members, has already made significant contributions to the organization's educational outreach.

"One of the first projects we did was a Zoom teaching about pronouns," Lagrou explains. "This was mostly aimed at educating parents and people who would be around trans people about how to use pronouns. Another thing that we've done recently is a youth needs assessment. We've sent out a form to youth across the country to fill out, and then we can see how we as an organization can help people."

This focus on education remains central to Stand with Trans' mission. The organization's Lifeline Library serves as a comprehensive digital repository of vetted information for transgender individuals and their families.

"We want the Stand with Trans website to be the destination for credible information," Keith told BTL earlier this year. "There is so much disinformation out there. It's really important to us to make sure that our content is vetted, that our sources are credible."

For Lagrou, this kind of education is vital in countering harmful narratives. "I think the more that people can understand about their loved ones or friends or family, or really just trans people in general, the more people can see that it's pretty normal and that we're not dangerous or anything like some of the media is making [us] out to be."

As Stand with Trans celebrates its milestone anniversary, Keith emphasizes the critical need for community financial support, especially as some funding sources have become less reliable. "So many companies have changed their funding priorities," Keith explains. "If there are folks in the community who want to support the work, then donate to Stand with Trans, donate to LGBT orgs in the state who are doing this work, support them, because it's harder right now to get the funding that we all used to get."

She stresses that contributions of any size make a difference in sustaining their services. "We need individual donors. If somebody goes online and sends us \$10, or they can send us \$1,000 or whatever that amount is, they should know that every single dollar helps us do the work that we do."

As Stand with Trans celebrates its 10-year milestone, its mission continues: supporting trans youth and their families with resources and advocacy, even when it means weathering a storm of anti-trans attacks and enduring an era when misinformation has eroded progress.

"I know how powerful this community is, and I know how loud the voices are," Keith says. "The community will survive and will grow and will be stronger — we are definitely stronger together."

For more information about Stand with Trans and to access the Lifeline Library, visit standwithtrans.org.



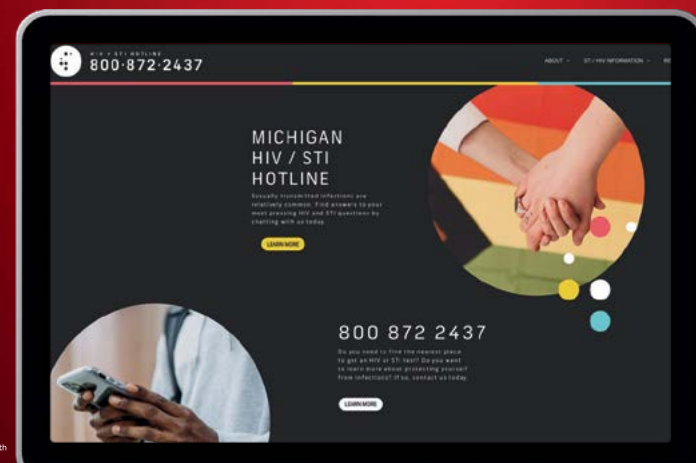
Augusten Lagrou. Courtesy photo

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How Matt Bomer Is Giving Voice to Queer Stories

The ‘Mid-Century Modern’ actor also reflects on literally coming out of the drama club closet and bringing ‘queer joy’ to TV

BY CHRIS AZZOPARDI

Matt Bomer is finally letting his perfectly coiffed hair down.

The out actor — celebrated for bringing groundbreaking LGBTQ+ stories to life in “The Normal Heart,” Netflix’s 2020 remake of “Boys in the Band” and the Showtime thriller “Fellow Travelers” — now dives headfirst into comedy with Hulu’s “Mid-Century Modern,” delivering a performance that just about no one saw coming. Not even Bomer himself.

As Jerry, the endearingly naive member of a “Golden Girls”-esque friend group sharing a Palm Springs home, which includes Nathan Lane’s Bunny and Nathan Lee Graham’s Arthur, Bomer trades historical trauma for sassy gay jokes. His character navigates these friendships, dating apps and Palm Springs’ unique queer ecosystem with wide-eyed bewilderment and undeniable charm — a man who hilariously confuses PrEP with Preparation H.

“That’s a testament to the brilliant people I’m surrounded by,” Bomer says when I mention his quotable one-liners, crediting the behind-the-scenes crew — and “Will & Grace” creators Max Mutchnick and David Kahn — for crafting comedy that’s “smart and sharp and funny.”

For an actor whose queer roles have often been defined by societal oppression, “Mid-Century Modern” represents something revolutionary: the chance to be messy, funny and unapologetically gay without the weight of historical burden. It’s representation that feels simultaneously groundbreaking and wonderfully ordinary.

“I will always do my best to try to give voice to our stories,” Bomer tells me, adding with genuine warmth, “I hope this show provides laughter and community to anyone out there who needs it right now.”

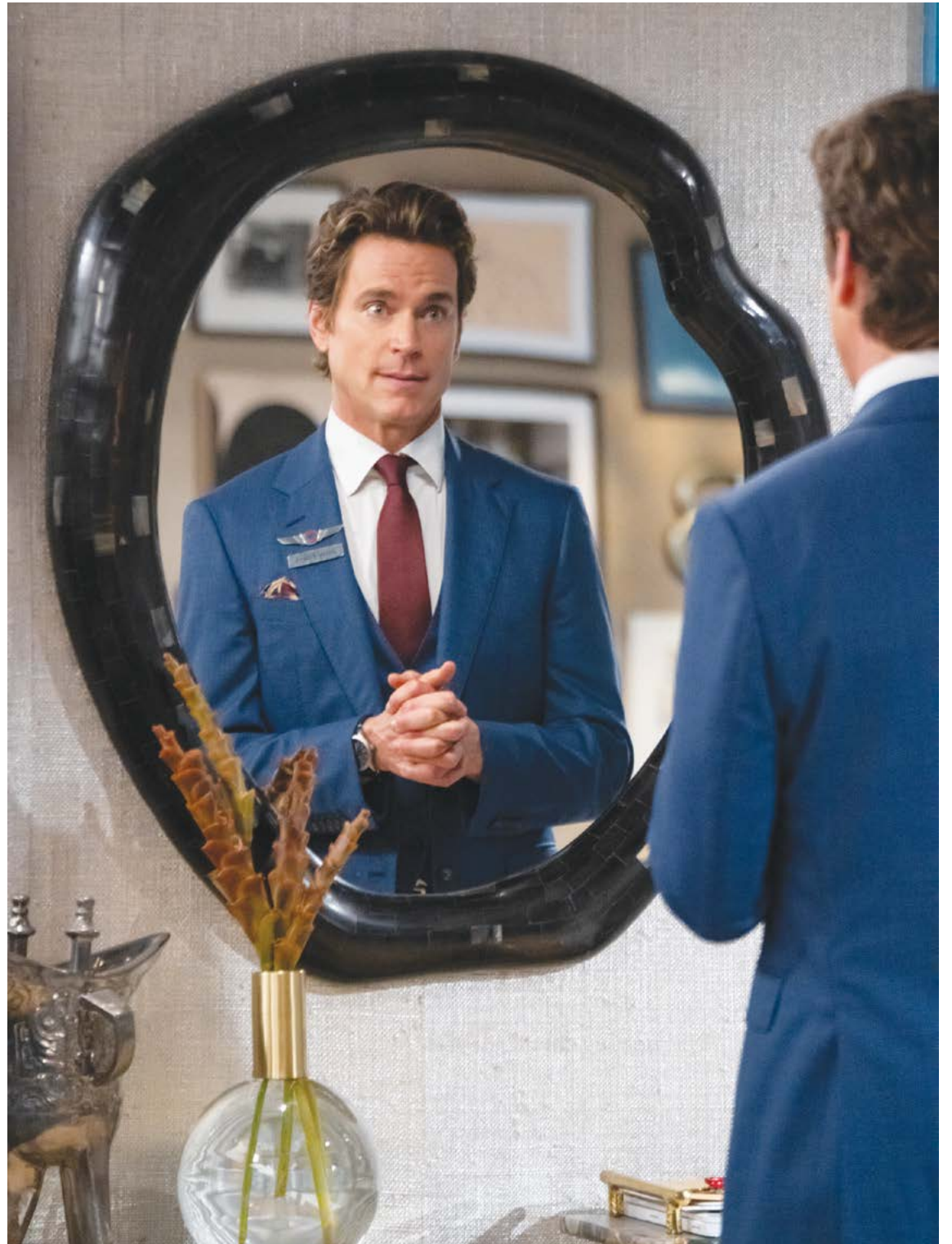
During our conversation, Bomer also reflected on how his Mormon upbringing informed his portrayal of Jerry, his full-circle moment with co-star Nathan Lane and why this political moment desperately calls for “queer joy.”

If you would’ve asked me 15 years ago if, one day, I’d hear Matt Bomer say lines like, “Don’t bottom shame me” and “I told you so, queen” onscreen, I don’t know if I would’ve said yes.

[Laughs.] Honestly, same! And I think reading these scripts and realizing that they were pushing the envelope a little bit and talking the way I’ve heard people talk and friends talk was something that made the show really appealing to me.

How fun was it to be able to lean into the way real gay adults talk?

Look, after having spent over a decade exploring the more trauma-induced, tragic, harrowing, really painful aspects of our history and our culture that have changed me for the better — and I wouldn’t trade for the world, and I hope I get to do it again at some point — it was nice to get to go to work and just experience joy through the characters and try to translate that joy to the audience and hopefully to folks at home who are watching who may need to laugh, as much as I know I needed to laugh going into this. I remember finishing “Fellow Travelers” and going, “Oh man, I need to experience joy. I need to do comedy.” When I saw the folks involved — Ryan Murphy asked me, I had a great conversation with Max and David, and I’ve been such a huge fan of the entire iconic cast for years — it was just a no-brainer to be a part of this.



Matt Bomer on “Mid-Century Modern.” Photo: Hulu

What parts of this friend group and your character, Jerry, did you personally identify with?

There was a lot of humanity in these characters and their flaws. That's all there. I think that's a lot of what found family is — finding that group of people who embrace you for your most authentic self, unapologetically. There are parts of you that may annoy them, just like any family. [Laughs.] And there's parts that may create a lot of trouble or get you into some hijinks.

And I think there were a couple, more in the Norman Lear-esque moments. One is in this scene with Zane Phillips. As someone who grew up in a very religious household and who understands some of the programming that can provide you with some challenges in your adult life as a gay man, getting to play that scene felt really cathartic for me. And then the scene with Billie Lourd [as Jerry's daughter, Becca] — I mean, I've had friends who've been in a similar experience and just the idea of redemption and having a relationship with somebody who you've hoped your whole life that you'd get a chance to have a relationship with, that was just a really poignant moment. And then there's a scene in the episode after Linda [Lavin] passed where we're hugging and Nathan Lane says something like "just three seconds or I might fall apart," and we still keep hugging. There was something about that. That's not an episode we ever could have seen coming but it encapsulated the show in a single moment.

There's definitely a Rose Nylund quality to Jerry's wide-eyed innocence. How did you approach building this character, and did classic sitcom characters like Rose from "Golden Girls" influence your portrayal?

Well, in the initial conversations I had with Max and David, they talked to me about a lot of the great kind of fool characters that they had loved, whether it was Edith from "All in the Family" or Woody on "Cheers" or Rose on "Golden Girls." So I thought about all three of those performances, but then I tried to just build the character the same way

you build a character in any medium, which is you take the circumstances and then build the life around it. And he did have this rich backstory. I mean, the fact that he was raised Mormon says so much about who he is and his positivity and his enthusiasm about the world, and his need for family and his desire for that to the extent that he would even forsake a part of himself to try to create a family before he realized that cost a lot of people emotionally, including himself. And just his sense to always try to see the silver lining.

Then this daughter, who he's always wanted to have a relationship with but has never had a chance to meet in their adult life. I mean, he's someone who electively takes the high road because if he looks under the hood too much, I think he might fall apart. So carrying all that



Matt Bomer and Nathan Lane. Photo: Hulu

underneath the positivity adds a different layer to him that it maybe... I didn't see in Rose as much, or it was never talked about. What was the mythical town in Minnesota she's always talking about?

St. Olaf.

St. Olaf, yeah. I mean, it seems like she only had good times in St. Olaf, and I think for Jerry, it was a little bit more of a mixed bag. He is the kind of guy who can fall apart really easily if you just crack the surface.

After working on queer-themed dramas and now a comedy, how do you feel these genres connect with audiences in different ways?

I can only speak from my experience. I've been so fortunate to be a part of things like "Fellow Travelers," where people stop me on the street and want to share so much of their personal story and how it resonated with them. But for me,

if there was ever messaging involved in something, even if it was a stage play, I always got the message a lot deeper if I laughed along the way.

So I think the opportunity in a time when daily, we're seeing our rights being picked away and infringed upon, to offer some joy to the world and to remind people that we're out there and we're human just like you — and we need validation and love and acceptance just like you — and to have that out in the world right now is something that I'm really grateful to be a part of.

Over the course of taping this season, I know it was a time when I needed to laugh, and we obviously experienced a lot of really challenging and heartbreaking things, but the fact that we got to laugh through it all helped us all along the way. I hope this can provide people who watch with some much-needed laughter. We need some queer joy on screen.

In the episode "Love Thy Neighbor," Jerry serves as the moral compass as he and his friends navigate a Republican neighbor supporting anti-queer legislation. How did you approach that episode, and how significant do you feel it is to release it at this moment?

To me, as somebody who has people in my life who are on both sides of the aisle and can see the humanity on both sides, it was important for me to try to get underneath that. It's something that I felt like I could bring to the character and the performance. And even though I stand firmly on my side and always will, I am able to love people who see differently than me, even heartbreakingly at times when their vote may mean it's a vote against me. I've had to stand up and do that and still try to be the bigger person and have some grace in that circumstance. I'm not saying we shouldn't stand up for what we believe in and stand up for ourselves, but it's nice to realize that we're all human beings in the same way. We're asking to be seen as three-dimensional human beings who want to be seen and loved and understood. I think we have to try to give that same

See Matt Bomer, page 24



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Mid-Century Modern
Puzzle can be found on page 25

moment that resonated with supporters nationwide.

“As I got into the room, I pulled up a seat in the front row,” Moss recalled. “It was very important to me that if people like Josh Schriver and others want to inflict harm upon our community, that they’re going to have to see the faces of real people who are impacted.”

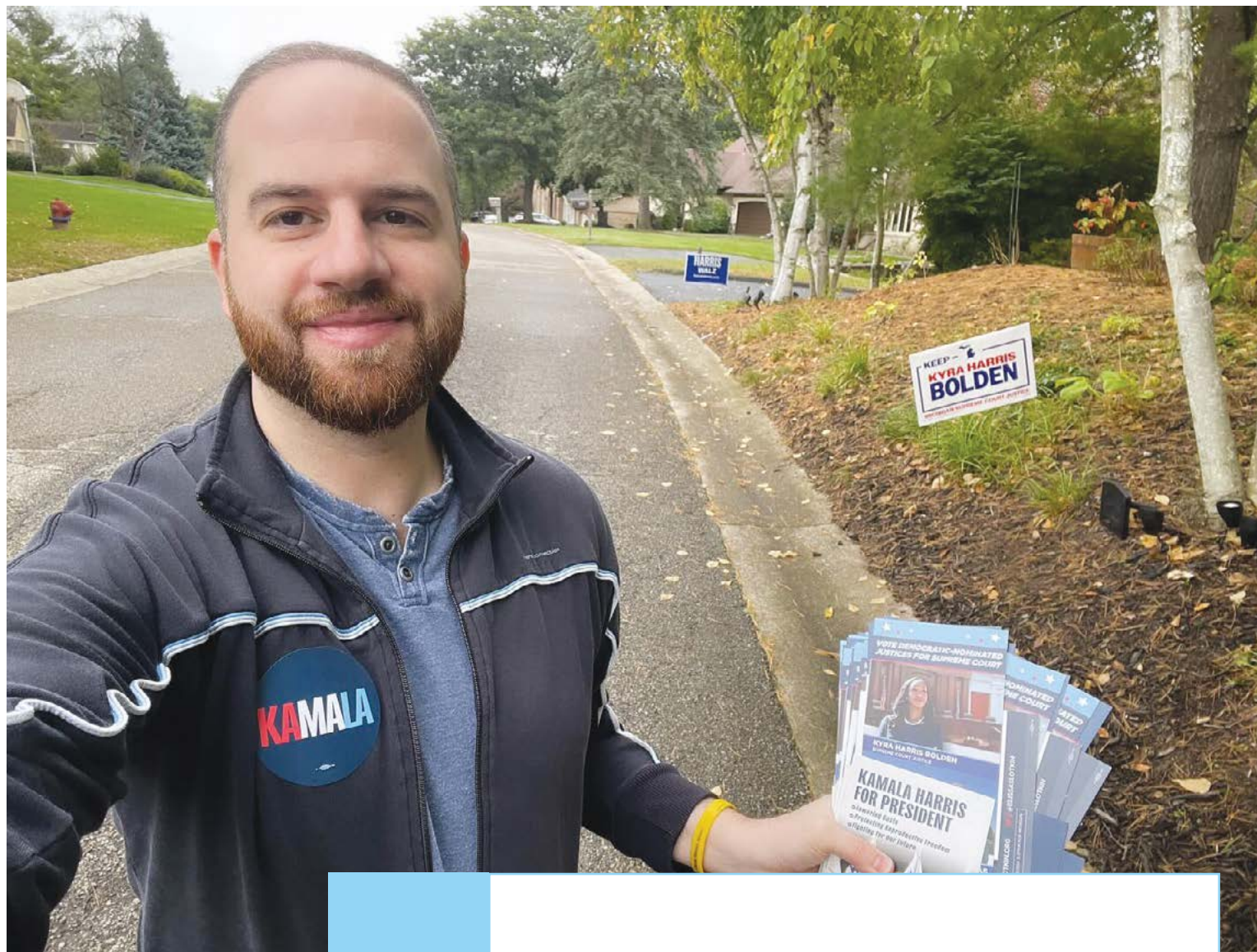
As Schriver fled the room without taking questions, Moss took over the podium, resulting in his passionate rebuke going viral online. “This was just as buffoonish as I expected it to be,” Moss said as Schriver left. “I think that this has fallen flat with people in the state of Michigan. I think that people respect their LGBTQ neighbors, their LGBTQ family members. These marriages have been the law of the land for 10 years. They contribute to family security. They contribute to economic security.”

After Moss’s rebuttal made the rounds on social media, “We got so many calls to my office,” Moss recalled. “Both within the district and across the state, but really across the country of people saying, ‘This is the way forward.’ In this very critical time in February, I think people were looking for bold actors to stand up. And my feet and my heart took me into that room.”

When asked if his confrontational style would continue into his congressional campaign, Moss was unequivocal. “That’s not going to change,” he said. “I’m going to continue to be outspoken as I always am on issues that are important to people who don’t have a voice. If I have a platform, I’m going to use it.”

“There was a moment, when I was younger, where I realized I’m never not going to be gay,” Moss told BTL in a 2023 profile. “This is gonna be me for the rest of my life, and it’s never going to change, so I have to live authentically, as who I am. If it’s not me at that microphone in the Senate, it’s nobody at that microphone in the Senate.”

Moss’s congressional bid builds on his landmark achievement in Michigan — the long-sought amendment to the Elliott-Larsen Civil Rights Act. As the lead architect of the legislation



Jeremy Moss campaigning door to door for Kamala Harris in September 2024.
Photo: Instagram/@jeremyallenmoss

alongside Rep. Jason Hoskins, Moss successfully expanded civil rights protections to Michigan’s LGBTQ+ community after years of Republican opposition.

“Whether it was serving in the minority under Republican-controlled legislature and taking to the podium every single day to demand action on LGBTQ+ rights, or as we started the term in the majority, I think it was that advocacy that elevated the Elliott-Larsen amendment to [be] among the first bills we introduced on the first day,” Moss said. The historic legislation, which Gov. Whitmer signed into law in 2023, prohibits discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing and public accommodations — making it one of Moss’s most significant legislative victories and a cornerstone of his political legacy in Michigan.

“

Whether it was serving in the minority under Republican-controlled legislature and taking to the podium every single day to demand action on LGBTQ+ rights, or as we started the term in the majority, I think it was that advocacy that elevated the Elliott-Larsen amendment to [be] among the first bills we introduced on the first day.

Moss also strongly criticized the recent anti-transgender bills, calling them “the same old playbook.” “It’s nothing new,” he told BTL. “I mean, you can

supplant ‘trans’ for ‘gay’ from 50, 40, 30 years ago. Lies, conspiracies and just outright hatred to a vulnerable population who just wants to be heard and just

wants to be listened to.”

Moss directly addressed attempts to ban transgender athletes from sports, noting, “The reality is today in Michigan, there

are zero trans athletes registered with the Michigan High School Athletic Association. That resolution to call on the association to ban trans athletes, it garnered 61 votes, shamefully, because it had some Democratic support as well. But that's 61 more people than there are trans student athletes here in the state of Michigan."

He further stressed that these issues are "contrived just to generate political controversy and political liftoff" and positioned the LGBTQ+ community as "very much used to having these elections run on our backs and being this political punching bag every election cycle. This is why it's essential to ensure our voices are heard in the rooms where decisions about us are being made."

While LGBTQ+ rights remain central to his identity and advocacy, Moss emphasized that his campaign will address broader concerns affecting all constituents.

"We can talk about Elliott-Larsen, but we can also talk about reproductive health care, where I was an advocate in support of scrapping the 1931 abortion felony and building upon the ballot proposal in 2022," Moss added. "All of these things are under threat at the federal level and will require a Michigan voice to be loud in that

discussion in Congress."

The Southfield native currently serves as Michigan Senate President Pro Tempore and chairs the Senate Elections Committee, where he's focused on protecting voting rights and increasing government transparency. "I have been the leading voice in safeguarding access to the ballot box," he said. "I truly believe that voting rights secure all other rights."

True to his Michigan political roots, Moss's U.S. Congressional election platform focuses on economic issues like lowering costs and fighting against practices like price gouging, alongside protecting fundamental rights. Moss specifically highlighted concerns about tariffs implemented under the Trump administration.

"I hear from the residents in my district, and I've represented hundreds of thousands of people who call the 11th Congressional District home," Moss said. "And there's a lot of anxiety and anguish about our economy and about our democracy. These tariffs are erratic and causing chaos — I don't think you could tell me what the policy is today because it could change later today, but they are raising costs and creating economic instability."

"This fight has to be about lowering

costs," he said. "We've done that in the legislature. We've delivered about a billion dollars in tax relief by scrapping the pension tax and boosting the working families tax credit. I've personally been leading the charge in the legislature to crack down on unscrupulous practices like price gouging, where people try to exploit others' economic anxieties."

Moss described his campaign as following in the footsteps of his mentor, Brenda Lawrence.

"I'm running in the mold of my mentor, retired Congresswoman Brenda Lawrence, who impressed on me that public service is about putting people first," Moss said in his announcement. "Her leadership continues to inspire me and I will take that spirit with me to Washington."

"With looming threats from Donald Trump and Elon Musk, Democrats can no longer be the party that shows up to this tough fight ahead with another pie chart," he added. "This is a moment that calls for bold leadership to step up and take action."

For more information about Jeremy Moss's campaign for Congress, visit votejeremymoss.com.

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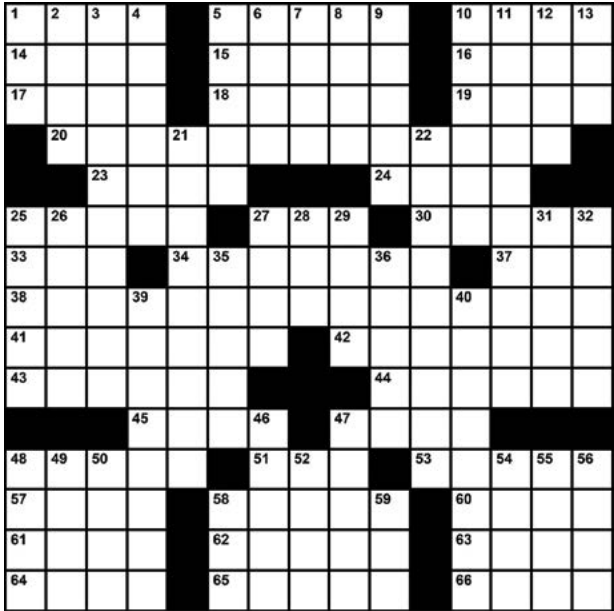


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Mid-Century Modern

Across

- 1 Mercury and Saturn but not Uranus
5 Abercrombie & Fitch buying binge
10 Is unlike Dorian Gray
14 What little things mean, in a Cher song

- 15 Virginia Stephen's married name
16 Load of money
17 Mollycoddle
18 Ed, of "I hate spunk!" fame
19 Bizet opera title character
20 Start of a quote from the comedy series "Mid-Century Modern"
23 Famous Queens Park
24 Britten's raincoats
25 Caesar's mother
27 Some U. degrees
30 Makes a hole bigger

- 33 Mo. after March
34 Make fun of
37 Part of a giggle
38 More of the quote
41 Gene of "Advise and Consent"
42 Collected bit by bit
43 "Frasier" dog and Izzard
44 Tchaikovsky pieces
45 Disney sci-fi flick
47 You can have them in your pants
48 Lorca's "Later"
51 "Arsenic and ____ Lace"
53 Loafer bottoms
57 More of the quote
58 End of the quote
60 Nathan, who plays Bunny, source of the quote
61 Think of it!
62 "Dirty Dancing" director Ardolina
63 Will portrayer McCormack
64 Sticking in your proboscis
65 Bob Marley, e.g.
66 Gets sum

Down

- 1 Where a trucker parks his bottom
2 "There oughta be ____"
3 Mike Brady portrayer
4 Stump
5 Swings from one side to the other
6 Top-drawer
7 Gossip columnist Barrett
8 Mt. sign

- 9 "The Deep Six" actor Zimballist
10 Singly
11 Manually stimulates?
12 Part of Liberace's style
13 T. Baldwin's title
21 Delta fleet
22 Juicy yellow fruit
25 Dull surface
26 One that sucks some sap
27 Body type?
28 Guy under J. Edgar?
29 Have sex with la Austin Powers
31 Street fight
32 Open positions
35 "Love's shadows ____ rich in joy": Romeo
36 "Howl" poet Ginsberg
39 Big name in chips
40 Taj Mahal, and others
46 Desmond of "Sunset Boulevard"
47 Video category for porn
48 Opposed to, to Gomer
49 Queen of Carthage
50 Makes hot
52 "____ and Clark"
54 Piecrust ingredient
55 Town in O-o-o-o-oklahoma
56 Moments that sound like lovemaking?
58 Lang. of Hedwig
59 "Once Upon a Mattress" legume

See p. 21 for answers

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Michigan Relocation

Continued from page 8

candidate gets elected, I'm moving and leaving the country.' People were very glib about it, but here we are."

While policy changes and concerns about identity documentation continue to emerge, Keith says it's hard to even give advice as the situations change daily.

"It's like living in a science-fiction movie," she says.

As Monroe leans on her community, she looks toward the future. She says her goal is to have a large enough property to one day have tiny homes to house trans youth who have been disowned by their families. She also says she would like to open a queer boutique complete with books, art and coffee, "where queer people can come and feel safe." It would be a place where the youth can work, earn money and land on their feet while learning from trans and queer elders.

"I know this project won't happen overnight, but it is a dream," says Monroe.

Thinking about this dream of hers

is something that keeps Monroe going through the planning and prepping. The mental load, she says, is draining.

"The fact that the government doesn't want us to exist weighs a lot on me as an outspoken trans person. I have to speak out on issues, but also understand my own mental health in the process," says Monroe.



Kennedy Monroe. Courtesy photo

"I've gained weight in the last three to four months due to stress eating, scared to know if I can get my family out of this mess. I just want to have a place that is ours, where we feel safe."

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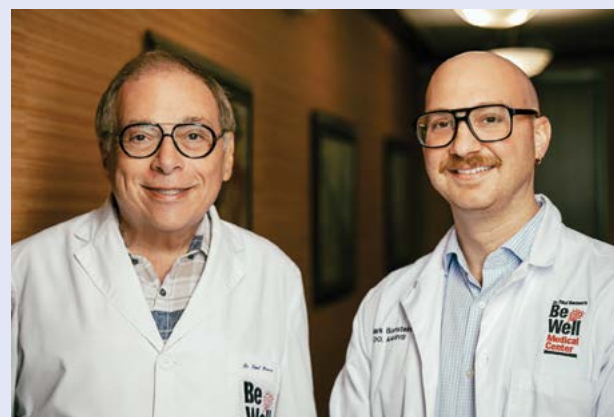
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